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Statement by Carl C. Taylor, Head,  
Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare

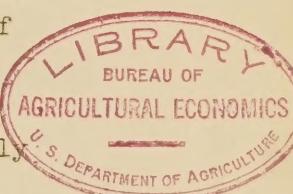
Presented before the Temporary National Economic Committee  
Washington, D. C., February 21, 1941

As an introduction to specific suggestions for programs of action for the so-called disadvantaged persons and families in American agriculture, may I briefly summarize the testimony of a number of persons who have appeared before this Committee.

1. There were, in the United States in 1929, approximately 1,700,000 farms which yielded gross farm income of less than \$600, based on value of products sold, traded, or used; a few more than 900,000 farms that yielded less than \$400 income; and almost 400,000 farms that yielded less than \$250. On these farms yielding less than \$600 income, approximately 7,700,000 men, women, and children lived, whose lives were disadvantaged because of the lack of purchasing power.

2. A fairly steady shift from owner to tenant operation and an increase in hired labor on both owner and tenant-operated farms since 1880 has resulted in an ever-increasing number of persons in agriculture occupying the lower rungs of the agricultural ladder.

3. There were in 1935, 2,865,000 tenant families on American farms, the total members of which constitute a population of approximately 13,000,000 people. More than 700,000 were sharecroppers, thus having status little, if any, above that of hired laborers. There are approximately 3,000,000 farm laborers, at least 300,000 of whom are migrants.





4. There are more than a half million farms in the United States on land that is so poor that it will literally starve the families living on it if they continue to try to make a living by farming it.

5. There is an increasing efficiency in the production per man in agriculture, but a steadily diminishing opportunity for employment on farms.

6. There has been a sizable shift in the ownership of farms from farmers to centralized lending agencies in satisfaction of debts, and an increase in the proportion of farm mortgage debt held by the centralized lending agencies.

7. By natural increase in population, there is added to working age group on the farm approximately 325,000 males each year. This is twice the number needed to replace older farmers who die or retire each year.

8. The greatest natural increases are in areas of lowest opportunity. If there were no migration from farms the increase of farm males seeking entrance into agriculture would be three times as many as there will be farms available. In the Southern Appalachians the ratio would be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 and even in Iowa would be 1.8 to 1.

9. The farm population is less than 25 percent of the national population, but it contains more than 30 percent of the Nation's children. The 10 States most able to support education are not rearing children in numbers large enough to maintain their populations without replacement from other States. The 10 States least able to support education have more than three times as many children as they need for replacement.



10. During the depression, at least  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million, or more than 1 out of every 4, rural families in the United States had received public assistance at some time.

11. In the 1937 Unemployment Census, 971,000 males of productive age living on farms stated they were totally unemployed; 576,000 additional registered as partially employed.

12. It is a conservative estimate that one-third of the farm families of the Nation are living on standards of living so low as to make them slum families.

The lines of action recommended to remedy or alleviate the plight of the disadvantaged people in agriculture described in the twelve statements just made are:

First - assistance which will help persons and families living in areas of low opportunity to migrate from these areas to areas of greater opportunity. Anything that will stimulate a pick-up in opportunity for industrial employment will automatically and quickly relieve some of the population pressure on the land. The extension of the submarginal land and forest land purchase programs, supplemented by a resettlement program would remove from cultivation the type of lands which cannot possibly furnish adequate support for families now living on them, and would help some of these families to move to lands that can support them. There are lands soon to be brought under irrigation in the Columbia River Basin and land in the Mississippi Delta that can be drained which should be used to create opportunities for families now living on submarginal lands or families for whom ascent up the agricultural ladder is growing steadily more difficult.



The expansion of national employment service which can furnish guidance to farm persons seeking employment in either farm or urban occupations would help to alleviate conditions more quickly than any other one thing.

Second - There should be a great expansion of public assistance in the fields of health and education. Health conditions are worst and health facilities most meager in the very areas where population pressure on the land is greatest, from which the greatest amount of migration takes place, and from which migration should be encouraged. The same is true of educational facilities and opportunities. Industrial areas and the better farming areas of the Nation do not escape the results of these conditions by refusing to vote funds to alleviate the conditions. Sixty percent of the farm-to-city migrants came from the Southern States. These States by taxing themselves twice the rates of the richer areas of the Nation cannot provide normal educational, health and other welfare services. Youth from these areas whether in good health or not, and with or without adequate schooling, by the hundreds of thousands each generation become residents in other areas. It is wisdom on the part of these other areas to help provide health, education, and other welfare opportunities to the youth in the areas where they are born and reared. This can be done only by programs of equalization supported by Federal tax funds and planned on a national basis.

Furthermore, to increase the educational opportunities of the disadvantaged persons and families in agriculture will do two other things: it will stimulate migration and will lower the birth rate. There is a direct correlation between educational status and migration from farms and an inverse correlation between educational status and rates of natural increase.



Third - There should be an expansion of programs of security for farm families - a great expansion of the Farm Security program and a further extension of the Social Security programs to farm people. The Farm Security Administration rehabilitation loan program is reconstructing the agricultural ladder for hundreds of thousands of farm families; the Tenant Purchase Program is working directly at this task; and the whole Farm Security Administration is doing more than all other agencies combined to develop family sized and family type farms, the most constructive thing being done in American agriculture today.

As rapidly as possible all the social securities should be extended to farm people and there is no reason why they and the provisions of the Wages and Hours Act should not be immediately applied to that increasing number of farms which are becoming industrialized.

Fourth - There is as much need for public works and slum clearance programs in rural as in urban areas. The unemployed in agriculture are, for the most part, located in the exact areas where soil, timber, and wild life conservation and flood control programs are most needed. In these same areas and others, exist hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of rural slum houses. To establish rural public works programs in these areas would serve a triple purpose - conserve and build up natural resources, furnish income to unemployed or ineffectively employed farm people, and eliminate part of our slum type of rural houses.

Fifth - Any encouragement or stimulus that can be given to the decentralization of industries or assistance that can be given to farmers in the development of new sources of employment, self-help or otherwise, will, on the one hand, help to stabilize the farm population and, on the other hand, prepare them more adequately for employment elsewhere when they migrate. Self-help cooperatives, part time farming, subsistence



homesteads, assistance in the production and marketing of handicrafts, and the bringing of industrial employment nearer to the farm, are all constructive programs that should be encouraged and aided.

Let me conclude by quoting the last three sentences of "Technology On The Farm," a document recently published by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. It says:

"Industrial expansion through armament expansion may be temporary and lead only to a recurrence of the problems we have been encountering; we should seek permanent stability for American farming; over a long period, it should be possible for the United States to adjust its economy in a way that will permit expansion of production in industry and agriculture. That would make possible a higher level of living for the entire population. That is our goal."

